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A TYPE OF VERBAL REPETITION IN OVID'S ELEGY

Latin elegy reached its final stage of formal development in the poetry of Ovid. The characteristic Roman tendency to reduce the metrical vehicle to sharply defined and rather inelastic laws had revealed itself clearly in his predecessors, but it waited for its culmination until Ovid had applied his extraordinary genius for rhythm and meter. By him the rhythmic formula of the couplet is worked out to completion in all its details.

The most obvious features of this formula, aside from certain purely metrical details, are the clear-cut division of each line—and especially of the pentameter—into halves by the regular placing of the main cæsura, and the exact coincidence of grammatical sentence and couplet. Or, viewing the couplet rather than the line as the unit of the verse-form, each group is made to resolve itself into four parts, each of which is, as exactly as may be, a half line; and with the conclusion of the four rhythmical parts falls also the conclusion of the grammatical sentence. Naturally, too, the subordinate parts of the grammatical sentence tend to coincide with the four rhythmical parts. One statement succeeds another in a continuous series, each rhythmically like the preceding, pauses almost invariably in the same places, and the rise and fall of sentences identically distributed over the eleven feet of the group, at whose conclusion they too must end.

It is not to be understood from this general description that the formula of the line or of the couplet is invariable. As a matter of fact, only one of the characteristics mentioned is invariable—namely, the equal division of the pentameter line. But the occasional departures from the scheme are so infrequent and of such slight force that the effect of a fixed formula produced upon the reader is not thereby materially weakened. On the contrary, the variations from the rule serve often to emphasize its fixed character, on the principle that exceptions prove the rule. And considered in the light of certain metrical features like the regularity of the dissyllabic close of the half-line of the pentameter and of such traits as middle rhyme in both hexameter and pentameter, the variations seem quite accidental. In short, in spite of insignificant variations, it becomes almost impossible to read the elegy of Ovid in any other way than in accordance with the formula described. And when rhyme is added, one is even tempt-

ed to depart altogether from a hexameter-pentameter theory, and to write it as a quatrain, thus:

Nempe favore sueae
Vicit tamen ille puellae.
Vincamus dominae
Quisque favore sueae. (Am. 3, 2, 17-18).

But it is with the effect of the formula rather than with its laws and exceptions that we are here concerned. The most pronounced effect, it seems to me, is that of monotony. One feels, as one reads, that the mould into which the expression of thought is to be poured for shaping is of much more importance to the poet than the thought which is to be shaped. The form overbalances the matter. And where form has been reduced, under these circumstances, to formula, monotony is the result. The ease and smoothness with which Ovid accomplished his object is admirable in the extreme, and is of the very essence of the power of one who could not speak in prose. But a more or less rigid formula in any verse-form which is made up of short units like the couplet or the quatrain inevitably results in a deadening monotony. Once the formula is devised, however great the skill may be with which the poet applies his thought to it, he is still but following the line of least resistance in confining himself to it. It soon becomes the easiest thing to do—a rhythmical habit, so to speak—to make statement and couplet coextensive. If it is true, as is often said, that the poet's thought or emotion dictates, in the first instance, the verse-form he shall use, it is equally true, on the other hand, that the rhythm of his verse-form, once selected, influences, or rather, determines the grouping of the successive thoughts when they find expression in words, in such fashion, at least, that the thought group and the rhythm group shall be co-terminous. Hence the failure, for example, of a couplet form to satisfy the requirements of narrative or dramatic verse. Neither story nor action can be forced with any degree of naturalness to come to full stops at regular intervals; and the narrative or dramatic poet who adopts such a form finds himself constantly struggling against the compelling force of the couplet end. For if he yields, he knows that a hopeless monotony will be the result. It is true that in the elegy the monotony of the couplet is a matter of less moment, because the poem is partly lyrical in character and is usually short. But, on the other hand, elegy—and especially Ovid's *Heroides*, *Ars Amatoria*, *Fasti*, and the *Epistulae ex Ponto*—possesses also many of the characteristics of narrative poetry; and just to the

extent that it does so, it suffers from such traits as beget monotony in the same fashion as epic verse does. And monotony even in a short poem is still monotony.¹

It is not, then, for his skill in perfecting his formula and in successfully fitting his thought to the formula that we give praise to Ovid as a maker of verses. It is, rather, for the brilliant skill of many sorts with which he emphasizes the charming qualities of the formula and at the same time relieves and offsets the unpleasant ones. Being a Roman, he must develop and abide strictly by the laws of his art; being a poet, he is able through many inventions to render attractive the stern necessities which the laws lay upon him.

The quality which more than any other affords us pleasure when we read his elegy is, of course, his keen understanding of the human material with which he deals. But this would be obscured and in part lost to us, if it were not for the brilliant wit which enables him to present this material with so much humor, simplicity, and force. It is his quick wit which guides him to the fine use of a hundred devices of rhetoric to relieve the monotony of the formula, and it is his unfailing sense of humor which keeps the devices within their proper bounds. Under the play of these things the monotony of the verse structure is almost forgotten. Verse division and couplet end are made to serve the figure of speech by throwing upon it a strong emphasis which would have been lost, if verse division and couplet end had not been the rule.

Of the rhetorical devices employed for such purposes none is handled more skillfully than that of verbal repetition. Ovid is easily a master in the use of this very tricky figure. His sweep is unlimited; there is no variety of it unknown to him.² I have selected but a single form of it for the purpose not only of illustrating his skill in its use, but also, in view of what has been said, of showing how he employs it in harmony with the laws of his formula.

The variety selected is that of repetition within the line which involves a change of inflection in the word repeated. The frequency of its occurrence is surprising, and the poet reveals such remarkable skill

¹ It is no doubt this quality which led v. Wilamowitz to describe Ovid's verse with the word "Klappermühle." Cf. Ehwald in *Jahresbericht* 109 (1901), p. 233: "Ovid hat sein Distichon so gebaut, dass der grammatische Satz mit ihm zusammenfällt: v. Wilamowitz hat dies mit einem scharfen Wort 'die Klappermühle des ovidischen Distichons' genannt."

² Vid. Poteat, *Repetition in Latin Poetry*, New York, 1912, p. 25 ff.

in the handling of it that a more systematic examination of it than it has yet received seems worth while.³

The words selected for repetition in altered forms are necessarily limited to those parts of speech which are subject to inflection: the noun, the adjective, the verb. Every possible combination of cases or of numbers is found in the treatment of declension, and in adjectives any mixture of the forms of comparison. The same freedom prevails in the repetition of verbs, but, of course, over a much wider field. The limitations imposed by the sense of the passage, not by any principle of exclusion applied to the repetition itself, are the only ones discoverable. The following examples must suffice to indicate the nature of this interplay of forms.

- Heu! melior quanto sors tua sorte mea (Am. 1, 6, 46).
- Quae movet ardores, est procul; ardor adest (Am. 2, 16, 12).
- Nec timor unus erat, facies non una timoris (A. A. 1, 121).
- Cum sequitur fortis fortior ipsa feras (Am. 2, 2, 32).
- Tange manu mensam, tangunt quo more precantes (Am. 1, 4, 27).
- Cum surges abitura domum, surgemus et omnes (Am. 1, 4, 55).
- Quod mihi das furtim, iure coacta dabis (Am. 1, 4, 64).
- Quid timeam, ignoro; timeo tamen omnia demens (Her. 1, 71).
- Utque ego te cupio, sic cupiere puellae (Her. 16, 93).
- Promittas, facito! quid enim promittere laedit (A. A. 1, 443).⁴

Nor is there any absolute restriction in the matter of the positions in the line occupied by the two forms of the repeated word. Examples are found of the word in one or the other of its forms in any foot of either the hexameter or the pentameter, and, in the case of monosyllables, of both forms in the same foot. But it is interesting to note here certain prevailing positions in the line which bespeak not so much the poet's arbitrary choice as his feeling for the natural place in the line where the very emphasis which is sought by repetition may best be secured.

For the hexameter the favored arrangement is to conclude the first half of the line with the word and to repeat it in its altered form just before the last word of the line; i. e., its first occurrence is just

³ Editors comment on instances of it. Poteat, *op. cit.*, groups it with other varieties. Schütze, *Quaestiones Ovidianarum Pars I* in *Jahresbericht ü. d. städt. Progymnasium*, Spandau, 1861, p. 14, cites a few examples. Loewe, *De nonnullis figuris quibus poet. Lat. utuntur*, Grima, 1863, p. 24, cites several examples from the Metamorphoses, and on p. 27 observes: "habemus enim polyptoton, aut in duo pluresque versus distributum, aut in uno coniunctum."

⁴ These few examples fail hopelessly to give even an approximate idea of the variety and extent of the inflectional change. But limited space forbids reproducing even the references, nor would it be worth while, since any reader may find full enough illustration within a few pages of Ovid selected at random.

before the principal cæsura, its second in the fourth and fifth feet, or in the fifth foot alone, especially if the last word of the line is dissyllabic. Thus:

Haec mihi contigerat, sed vir non contigit illi (Am. 3, 7, 43).⁵

Almost as common as this postponement of the repeated word is the immediate repetition in juxtaposition, usually at the end of the first half-line and at the beginning of the second. Thus:

Quo fugis? obstat hiemps. hiemis mihi gratia prosit (Her. 7, 41).⁶

It is difficult to say which of the two most frequent arrangements is the more effective. What is gained by the contrast of an altered form immediately repeated in the one is offset by a more pleasing rhythm in the handling of the word in the other.

Juxtaposition is by no means confined to the position noted, although it is much less frequent in other positions. It is found also before the principal cæsura, as in:

Cum surgit, surges; donec sedet illa, sedebis (A. A. 1, 503);⁷

and after the principal cæsura, as in:

Cedant carminibus reges regumque triumphi (Am. 1, 15, 33).⁸

It occurs rather rarely at the ends of lines, as in

Cumque tot his (sed non opus est tibi coniuge) coniunx (Her. 3, 37).⁹

Other favored positions for the two words are the ends of each half-line, as in

Si brevis es, sedeas, ne stans videare sedere (A. A. 3, 263).¹⁰

and the beginnings of each half-line, as in

Tange manu mensam, tangunt quo more precantes (Am. 1, 4, 27).¹¹

One would think that the first place and the last place in the line would tempt to a device of this sort because of the rather compelling emphasis which could thus be secured. But such arrangement is very rare:

Vivimus, et non sum, Theseu, tua, si modo vivit (Her. 10, 75).¹²

⁵ Other examples are Am. 2, 19, 51; A. A. 1, 397; Her. 2, 7; Trist. 3, 10, 31; Ex. Pont. 1, 4, 55; Fast. 2, 65; et al.

⁶ Other examples are Am. 3, 2, 59; A. A. 1, 63; Her. 2, 95; Trist. 1, 3, 99; Ex. Pont. 1, 2, 127; Fast. 2, 65; et al.

⁷ Other examples are Am. 3, 15, 15; A. A. 1, 645; Her. 4, 109; Trist. 2, 401; Ex. Pont. 1, 10, 23; Fast. 1, 217; et al.

⁸ Other examples are Her. 8, 115; Trist. 3, 11, 49; 4, 7, 15; Ex. Pont. 1, 4, 53; 1, 5, 29; Fast. 1, 287; et al.

⁹ Other examples are Her. 5, 59; Trist. 4, 3, 65; Ex. Pont. 4, 7, 43; Fast. 1, 553.

¹⁰ Other examples are Am. 1, 8, 89; A. A. 1, 255; Trist. 5, 13, 7; Ex. Pont. 3, 1, 47; et al.

¹¹ Other examples are Am. 3, 3, 7; Her. 8, 61; Trist. 5, 2, 71; Ex. Pont. 3, 1, 47; et al.

¹² Another example, Trist. 2, 9.

In the pentameter, on the other hand, the favored position for the repeated word is at the end of each half-line, as in

Et, qua tu biberis, hac ego parte bibam (Am. 1, 4, 32).¹³

This was to be expected, since Ovid's almost unvarying division of the pentameter into two equal halves throws all the stress of the line on these two commanding positions.

Next to this arrangement is the one, common also in the hexameter, of juxtaposition at the end of the first half-line and at the beginning of the second. Thus:

Ille tenet palmarum: palma petenda meast (Am. 3, 2, 82).¹⁴

Rather frequent is the juxtaposition in the second half of the line, and, unlike the hexameter, often at the end, as in

Causa fuit multis noster amoris amor (Am. 3, 11, 20);¹⁵

and more rarely before the penthemimeral cæsura, as in

Posse capi; capies, tu modo tende plagas (A. A. 1, 270).¹⁶

Rather frequent is the arrangement whereby the word is placed at the beginning of each half-line, as in

Pax iuvat et media pace repertus amor (Am. 3, 2, 50).¹⁷

The plan favored for the hexameter of placing the word at the end of the first half-line and repeating it in the fifth foot occurs also in the pentameter, but much more rarely. An example of it may be seen in

Quotque fretum pisces, ovaque piscis habet (Trist. 4, 1, 56).¹⁸

From this summary of many hundreds of examples it will be seen that, while the usage in the hexameter differs from that in the pentameter, the principle determining the position of the repeated word in both cases is the same. One of two alternatives is the general rule: either the rhythmically emphatic positions in the line, like the beginning or end of each half, are used, or the word is thrown into sharp relief by having its two forms appear in juxtaposition at any point in the line. If juxtaposition can be combined with the rhythmically emphatic positions, the effectiveness of the repetition is increased to its highest point. And Ovid is abundantly skillful, as has been seen in the examples cited, in bringing about this desired combination.

¹³ Other examples are Am. 2, 4, 20; A. A. 1, 140; Her. 2, 58; Ex Pont. 1, 7, 70; Fast. 1, 50; et al.

¹⁴ Other examples are Am. 3, 3, 22; Her. 4, 64; Trist. 1, 1, 128; Ex Pont. 4, 12, 22; et al.

¹⁵ Other examples are Am. 3, 3, 32; A. A. 1, 596; Her. 12, 198; Trist. 3, 4, 72; et al.

¹⁶ Another example, Ex Pont. 4, 3, 12.

¹⁷ Other examples are Trist. 1, 2, 104; Ex Pont. 1, 8, 30; et al.

¹⁸ Another example, Trist. 1, 4, 28.

The variety so far considered is but the most elementary of those employed by Ovid. The poet is capable of a much richer and more complex elaboration of the figure than this. And such is his skill that the most elaborate forms have the same ease and fluency as the simplest. The reader is never conscious of the slightest halting, the slightest disturbance of the rhythm, the slightest effort of any sort on the part of the poet to work out a figure whose intricacies would be the despair of a most finished phrase-maker.

The second stage of development consists in the repetition of two words in the line, one with form changed and one with form unchanged. Examples in hexameter and pentameter, respectively, are

Et sibi pauca rogent: multos si pauca rogabunt (Am. 1, 8, 89);
Sola locat noctes, sola locanda venit (Am. 1, 10, 30).

It seems more or less unprofitable to discuss the arrangement of the words in the line in this form of repetition, because the range of possibility is necessarily quite limited by the length of the line. Since almost the whole of the line is taken up by the repeated words, it is practically a necessity to divide the pairs of words between the two halves of the line. There is a good deal of variation from this general statement, but it is not of such a nature as to make it worth while to illustrate. The matter reduces itself to a mere question of whether the identical order or the chiastic shall be employed within the pairs themselves, and whether the pairs shall stand in juxtaposition or be separated by intervening words. The identical order and the separation of the pairs by the intervention of another word are illustrated by the example

Sola locat noctes, sola locanda venit (Am. 1, 10, 30).¹⁹

This order is much more frequent than the chiastic. Sometimes the two words of one of the pairs are separated by the intervention of another word. When this is the case, a little is lost in emphasis, but on the whole the rhythmical effect is smoother than it is when the words of each pair stand together. An example is

Pax Cererem nutrit, pacis alumna Ceres (Fast. 1, 704).

The chiastic order and the juxtaposition of the pairs of words are illustrated in

Spectabat terram: terram spectare decebat (Am. 2, 5, 43).

The most celebrated line of this description in Ovid is

Spectatum veniunt, veniunt spectentur ut ipsae (A. A. 1, 99).

¹⁹ Other examples are Am. 1, 8, 89; A. A. 1, 262; Her. 2, 143; Ex Pont. 3, 4, 112; et al.

Schwering,²⁰ in a very full and interesting appreciation of the line, calls attention to the chiastic order, to the occurrence of the pairs of words in separate halves of the line, and to the charm of the surprise which results from the unexpected alteration of one of the words after the other has been effectively repeated without alteration. This quality of surprise belongs, though in varying degrees of effectiveness, it is true, to all lines which contain the double repetition. We feel it almost as keenly, for example, in

Sola locat noctes, sola locanda venit.

Here the intervening word *noctes* and the identical word order within the pairs deprive the line of the suddenness of the change felt in the perfect example. Nevertheless, wherever an altered form follows an unaltered form, we are of necessity held in suspense and made subject to surprise until the line is completed. Very often, when the wit is not so ready as in the lines quoted, it is not at all difficult to predict the second half of the line from the first half, but never in the very nature of the case is the second half a mere repetition of the thought of the first half.

Ovid sometimes gets much the same effect through a change of the part of speech in one of the words instead of the more usual inflectional change, as in

Restat iter caeli; caelo temptabimus ire (A. A. 2, 37);²¹

or by using a different word altogether, not even etymologically related, and yet somehow enough like the same to produce the same impression. An excellent illustration of this effect is found in

Non debet dolor hinc, debet abesse pudor (Trist. 4, 3, 62).

It is a still more intricate refinement of the repetition when both repeated words are made to undergo inflectional change, a variety most easily effected by a mere swapping of cases between the words, as in

Speque timor dubia spesque timore cadit (Her. 9, 42).

The third stage of elaboration consists in the addition of a third word to the group to be repeated. As each word is added to such a group, it becomes increasingly difficult, of course, to multiply altered

²⁰ *De Ovidio et Menandro, Rhein. Mus.* 69 (1914), p. 233 ff. Schwering's purpose in examining this particular line is to show its derivation through Plautus from Menander. In view of the frequency with which Ovid employs the figure, and of his evident mastery of it, together with the rather commonplace, though witty, nature of the satire in the line, so characteristic of the poet, it seems quite daring to base an argument concerning source on such a foundation.

²¹ Other examples are Am. 1, 9, 4; Rem. Am. 119.

forms. It is natural, therefore, to find that in most cases of triple repetition involving any change at all only one word undergoes inflectional change. An example,

Oscula aperta dabas, oscula aperta dabis (Her. 4, 144).

Somewhat more complex is the line

Hinc amor, hinc timor est; ipsum timor auget amorem (Her. 12, 61).

Here the charm lies in the broken balance of the two halves of the line and in the word grouping of each. In the first half, two emotions are set in opposition to each other with the aid of a single repetition; in the second, they are brought into unexpected harmony by means of a double repetition brought over from the first half, and by the alteration of a single case held till the last breath of the line.

Inflectional change in two of the three words occurs in

Quod sequitur, fugio; quod fugit, ipse sequor (Am. 2, 19, 36);

and inflectional change of all three words in

Tu tibi dux comiti, tu comes ipsa duci (Her. 14, 106).

If we should extend our consideration of the type of repetition we have been discussing beyond the limits of the single line, we would find an elaboration of the device which would defy description. But in so doing we would take away that very restriction of the short metrical group which, because it renders the achievement more difficult, for that very reason reveals the more clearly the poet's skill in rhythm and rhetoric. Indeed, there are countless instances in which the repetition is spread over the space of the couplet rather than of the line—and the couplet is, after all, the unit of elegy—and in these the poet secures about the same effect as in the more restricted field. But there are countless instances, too, in which the repetition is continued beyond the bounds of the couplet itself, sometimes beginning in the pentameter and concluding in the hexameter, sometimes passing beyond the couplet end into a third line—in both cases disregarding the very metrical unit of the verse-form. And the greater the number of lines, the greater the loss to the repetition in compactness, in antithesis, in charm. It finally ceases to be even interesting. The extent, however, to which Ovid can carry such repetition within the line through a short series of verses may at least be pointed out in so excellent an example as the following:

Arguet; arguito; quidquid probat illa, probato!

Quod dicet, dicas; quod negat illa, neges!

Riserit: adride; si flebit, flere memento!

Imponat leges vultibus illa tuis!

Seu ludet numerosque manu iactabit eburnos,

Tu male iactato, tu male iacta dato! (A. A. 2, 199-204).

As has been said, the frequency with which repetition of this description occurs throughout the elegy of Ovid is surprising. There is hardly a page without one or more instances of it, and some passages, like that just quoted, seem little more than elaborate series of antitheses made up of this complex word-play. This is especially the case with the elegy of the first period devoted to the conventional erotic themes. In the period of exile when his elegy is given up to other matters, the poet makes much rarer use of it in any form, and almost none at all in its highly developed complexities. This difference between the two periods in frequency of use is due not to any loss of skill on Ovid's part, nor, on the other hand, to any definite development of his art, but, rather, to the complete change of mood and of subject matter which came about as a result of his public disgrace. Such play with words is totally out of harmony with the seriousness and the personal bitterness of his later poetry.

The uses to which the poet puts the device are obvious. Very often repetition in this form, as in other forms, is no more than a mere necessity in the expression of the thought. A given word, not its substitute or synonym, must be repeated in order to complete the statement. There is no emotional quality in it, no intellectual skill: anything else would be incorrect or unsatisfying.

Occasionally, on the other hand, the purpose of the repetition is purely that of emotional emphasis. In this use it is found most frequently in such poems as the *Heroïdes*, whose tone is wholly serious notwithstanding much that is patently artificial. The effect is illustrated by such lines as

Cumque tuis lacrimis lacrimas confundere nostras (Her. 2, 95),
Tristis abis; oculis abeuntem prosequor uidis (Her. 12, 55).

Here the sense would have been complete without the repetition, but the emotion has been infinitely deepened by the iteration of the one word in the line which gives clearest expression to the feeling of the line. And one feels that the very change in the inflectional form also in a word of such importance is a decided addition to the emotional emphasis.

In these two uses it may be said that the poet is unconscious of any play on words. There is no place for tricking the reader by a deliberate juggling. The one case is simply a satisfying of the requirements of clear statement; the other is a sincere attempt to reproduce in words a very real feeling in the poet's heart or in the heart of a character created by the poet.

But these two uses are not the main ones. A certain humorous—one might almost say, comic—element enters into the greater number of instances. It becomes then a conscious juggling with words, a trial of skill on the part of the poet to see what he can accomplish in witty antithesis. It is wholly rhetorical, in the sense that it is an artificial invention to catch and to hold the reader's attention, not natural to straightforward expression. One is tempted to describe it by the adjective "clever" and to imagine that one catches a glimpse of the twinkling eyes of the author as he writes.²² It lends itself finely to the light form of satire which characterizes the *Ars Amatoria*, and to the preceptorial quality of all his elegy. It is a bright form of playfulness which finds its natural place in the period of youth and of adventure rather than in that of a broken spirit.

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²² Ribbeck, *Geschichte d. röm. Dichtung*, II, 338, writes: "Noch weiter geht das Wohlgefallen an wörtlicher oder wenig veränderter Wiederholung zweier halber oder auch ganzer Verse unmittelbar hintereinander, welche den Eindruck der Einfachheit, des natürlichen Plaudertones, der Märchenweise bisweilen auch eines neckischen Scherzes, eines Wortspiels machen soll."